

URGENT ACTION

160 FAMILIES HAVE ONE WEEK TO DISMANTLE HOMES

Two villages in Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, have received an official notice that they will have to leave their homes within seven days, as a private company is redeveloping the site for tourism and commercial purposes. Around 160 families have been ordered to move from the area without adequate alternative housing or fair and just compensation being provided.

On 10 August 2009, two lakeside villages at Boeung Kak Lake in central Phnom Penh, Village 2 and Village 4, received an official notice signed by the Daun Penh district governor, giving them seven days to dismantle their houses. The notice offers three options to those affected: compensation of 8,000 USD plus an additional two million riel (approx 500 USD) to cover the cost of dismantling the houses; a flat at a resettlement site some 20 kilometres away plus two million riel; or new housing on-site but with temporary relocation. The offer of on-site development is welcome as it demonstrates that the authorities are exploring alternatives other than eviction. This is also the option favoured by most of the 160 families. However, according to the notice, they still have to dismantle their homes within seven days and accept relocation to a site far away from their work places and schools for an undetermined period, while having no formal assurances that they will be able to return to secure tenure at Boeung Kak. The resettlement site also lacks shelter, clean water, sanitation and health services.

Around 4,200 families living on or around Boeung Kak Lake in central Phnom Penh are affected by the re-development, which is the outcome of an agreement reached in 2007 between the Municipality of Phnom Penh and a private company. The company started filling the lake with sand in August 2008, in preparation for building.

The agreement was made without any prior consultation with the affected families, who since learning about the deal have repeatedly protested and voiced concern about the plans. At least two villagers have been arrested for their peaceful protests. Company workers and security forces have intimidated and harassed many others, while the rising water levels caused by the filling of the lake, have flooded and destroyed many homes around its shore, forcing people to move.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Khmer or your own language:

- √ Urging the authorities to halt immediately any plans to forcibly evict the families living in Villages 2 and 4 in Boeung Kak;
- √ urging them to reconsider the plan to move the community to a resettlement site at Damnak Trayoeung, which has no adequate shelter, water, electricity, sanitation, sewerage, health care or job opportunities;
- √ Calling on the authorities to hold genuine consultations about the onsite development plans, including clarifying the time frame for temporary relocation and a guarantee of security of tenure at Boeung Kak;
- √ Demanding that they uphold Cambodia's obligations under international human rights treaties prohibiting forced eviction and related human rights violations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 September 2009 TO:

Kep Chuktema

Governor

Phnom Penh Municipality

69 Blvd. Preah Monivong

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Fax: + 855 23 526101

Email: phnompenh@phnompenh.gov.kh

Salutation: Dear Governor

Sar Kheng

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of

Interior,

75 Norodom Blvd. Khan

Chamkarmon

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Fax: + 855 23 212708

Email: moi@interior.gov.kh

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Forced evictions are carried out without adequate notice and consultation with those affected, without legal safeguards and without assurances of adequate alternative accommodation. Under international law, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR), Cambodia is prohibited from carrying out forced evictions, and must protect people from them.

In February 2007 the Municipality of Phnom Penh entered into a 99-year lease agreement for US\$79 million for 133 hectares, including Boeung Kak lake and surrounding land, with a private developer, Shukaku Inc. The company's president is Lau Meng Khin, a senator from the ruling Cambodian People's Party.

According to official information, Shukaku will fill 90 percent of the lake and turn the landfill into "pleasant, trade, and service places for domestic and international tourists". Since the company began filling the lake on 26 August 2008, flooding has increased and caused the destruction of some houses. Hundreds of families have been forced to move out of their flooded and crumbling houses. By August 2009, around a third of the lake had been filled.

The development may lead to the eviction of a total around 4,200 families, many of whom have strong legal claims to the land under the 2001 Land Law.

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